



APPRENTICESHIP WORKS

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SHARE THE BENEFITS OF APPRENTICESHIP

Know someone interested in becoming an apprentice? Or an employer who wants to start an apprenticeship program? Information and resources are available at apprenticeshipmn.com.

FEATURED STORIES



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tomorrow

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TERRY TURNS LOVE OF CARING FOR OTHERS INTO APPRENTICESHIP SUCCESS

Growing up in Louisiana and helping her mother care for her grandmother, Chantell Terry felt like caregiving was something hard-wired into her long before she became a supervisor for a trio of Twin Cities group homes for the disabled. “I just loved caring for others,” she said.

When Terry found her way to Minnesota she drifted to customer service jobs and then found work at a nursing home. She then began working nights at Mount Olivet Rolling Acres, which has group homes for people with developmental disabilities across the Twin Cities metro.

She’d fold clothes and do other house tasks and interact with residents. Terry helped the residents get dressed and ready for the day, gather them for breakfast and try to leave them with a dose of positive energy before the day shift arrived.

“Clients appreciate you so much,” she said. “It makes my heart happy.”

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TRAINING PROGRAM LEADS TO APPRENTICESHIP

Prior to becoming an apprentice carpenter, Ernest Luera Milian participated in a five-week training program offered at the Carpenters Training Institute and funded by the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry's APEX grant.

The first week of the program consisted of OSHA safety training, first aid/CPR and tool orientation. The remaining four weeks provided Luera Milian with exposure to concrete forms, interior systems, wood framing and finish work.

After completing the training in June 2018, Luera Milian was hired by Brand Safeway as an apprentice carpenter. Since then, he went on to work for other contractors and further developed his skills. Dale Schmidtke, one of Luera Milian's supervising journeyworkers, gave him high praise for his attention to detail. "He applies himself and learns quickly," Schmidtke said.

Luera Milian hopes to become a foreman in the future. He credits the apprenticeship program for providing the essential organizational and people skills necessary to understand how his work impacts others. "The journeyworkers will show you all the tricks of the trade including how to find ways to complete the project efficiently as a team," he said.



Apprentice Ernest Luera Milian.

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After about two months of proving her skills with patients and showing dependability, her supervisor told her about Mount Olivet's registered apprenticeship program. Developed three years ago, it nurtures future supervisors with in-depth leadership training, field-specific skills and a chance to experience the company's wide clientele settings.

Terry knew the additional studying wouldn't be easy. She was still working two jobs: the night shift at the Mount Olivet group home and shifts at a St. Paul hotel. But she took the chance in spring 2019 and powered through the first few months despite feeling overwhelmed at first.

"I knew it would be worth it," she said.

The apprenticeship program prepared her for following company policies and procedures, handling discipline issues, hiring new caregivers, preparing budgets and always looking out for the clients who have made her job worthwhile since the first day.

Her apprenticeship allowed her to move up in the organization. In April 2020 she became a supervisor and manages about 30 people at three group homes. "I definitely feel more confident in doing my job, and it made me be a better person," she said.

"I don't have to work two jobs anymore," she said. "I work Monday through Friday, and it isn't so hectic. Now I feel like I have a regular life."



Apprentice Chantell Terry.

CONSTRUCT TOMORROW NAVIGATES CHALLENGES OF 2020

■ By Tim Busse, executive director, Construct Tomorrow

The past year has been unlike any other. The events of 2020 have been a series of rolling challenges that have tested everyone, and it can be hard to feel optimistic when there are still so many challenges ahead. But this difficult time has also shined a light on the importance of optimism, hope and a willingness to adapt to change.

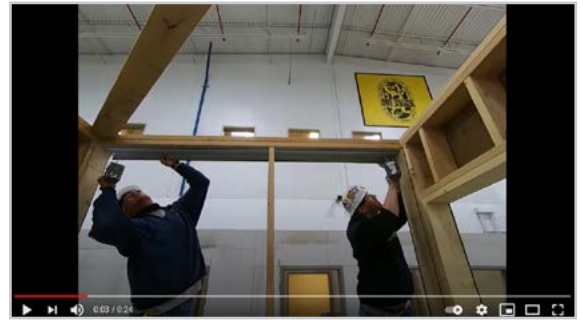
Cartoonist Walt Kelly used to say “we are confronted with insurmountable opportunities.” Like so many other organizations, that’s how Construct Tomorrow has approached the past 12 months. Throughout this unprecedented year, Construct Tomorrow has re-imagined the ways we connect with students while remaining committed to our mission of raising awareness among high school students about the outstanding career opportunities available in the building and construction trades via a registered apprenticeship education.

As many know, in-person student events are the fundamental piece of Construct Tomorrow’s success. With student events not possible this school year, Construct Tomorrow has joined the rest of the world in pivoting to video and digital engagement. In our Apprentice POV video series, a registered apprentice wears a video camera on their hardhat during a day at a training center to show what it looks like from their point of view. Our collection of videos is growing and we’re working to include all of the apprenticeship training centers.

We’re also well into production of a second video series called Ask an Apprentice. We’re recording questions from high school students like “How did you learn about your registered apprenticeship program?” or “What did you do in school to prepare you for registered apprenticeship?” and then turning the camera around to get answers from registered apprentices.

Finally, Construct Tomorrow has expanded our efforts to reach parents, teachers and community influencers. Virtual presentations in front of Rotary clubs, chambers of commerce and community groups across the state have allowed us to talk directly to adults who help young people make decisions about their future. The response from these groups has been outstanding and the information they take away about the benefits of a registered apprenticeship education will undoubtedly influence their conversations with the young people in their lives.

Despite the current challenges, Construct Tomorrow remains committed to hosting our very successful personal, one-on-one student events to spark interest in registered apprenticeship. We hope and expect to be out again during the 2021-2022 school year. We hope to see you then. More about Construct Tomorrow is at www.constructtomorrow.org.



A new video series from Construct Tomorrow offers a point-of-view look at apprenticeship training.

■ ‘Carpenter’ continued from page 2

Because of his apprenticeship, Luera Milian is earning higher wages and receiving benefits for his family. “I like not having two jobs, and I don’t have to worry about anything,” he said. He encourages anyone who has a high school diploma or GED and is interested in a good paying job to look into apprenticeship programs.

Chelsea Hoops from the Carpenters Training Institute said that there is up to a 90% graduation rate for participants in the APEX program. “It is rewarding to go to a graduation where all graduates have a job to go to on Monday,” she said.

Since 2017, the APEX programs have prepared approximately 200 individuals – with a focus on women and underrepresented populations – to enter registered apprenticeship programs.

LEARNING CONFIDENCE WHILE LEARNING THE JOB

Djiedjom Blabuh, an apprentice machinist at Metropolitan Council, says his registered apprenticeship experience has helped him become much more confident in his career. “They let you work without experience and it is okay to make mistakes and learn from them,” he said.

Blabuh was accepted into the Metropolitan Council’s apprenticeship program in April 2020 without any welding or machinery experience.

Now on the tank crew, he described his first welding experience as “awesome” and is excited to learn a valuable skill such as welding.

John Tierney, mechanical maintenance manager and apprenticeship program supervisor, said their apprenticeship program is set-up into categories by work tasks and equipment to provide an apprentice with a comprehensive learning experience.



Apprentice Djiedjom Blabuh.

The apprenticeship program includes learning methods of processing wastewater using unique equipment in many cases specific to the wastewater industry. Apprentices must spend a prescribed amount of time in fourteen areas learning how the equipment works and how to maintain and repair machines, all while applying safe work practices.

As someone new to the industry, Blabuh said the apprenticeship program provides the training and onsite experience needed to succeed. “The apprenticeship program has taught me to not be afraid of trying anything new.”

Blabuh encourages everyone who is interested in learning, and doing something different each day, to consider the apprenticeship program at the Metropolitan Council. “A lot of people have been here a long time and they are happy to teach you,” he said, adding that the journeymen’s attention to detail and patience to teach apprentices is very helpful.

APPRENTICESHIP MINNESOTA BY-THE-NUMBERS

	October	November	December
Sponsor information			
Active sponsor	188	188	188
New sponsors	1	0	2
New occupations	2	0	3
Apprentice information			
Total apprentices	11,763	11,375	11,168
Females	810	783	771
Minorities	2,441	2,334	2,284
Veterans	823	800	782
New apprentices	138	99	42
Graduations	104	65	141
Services to sponsors and apprentices			
Information calls	56	29	35
Community outreach	13	13	14
Technical visits	4	0	1
Prospective sponsors	4	3	17

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MAKING THE ADJUSTMENT: UNION APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS GET CREATIVE TO NAVIGATE COVID-19 SAFELY

■ By Michael Moore, Saint Paul Union Advocate editor

Early December is usually a festive time at Cement Masons Local 633's facility in New Brighton. The union's cement mason and plasterer apprentices deck the training hall with a holiday display that spotlights their budding mastery of the craft, just in time for the union's holiday party.

Not this year, of course.

But while "Concrete Christmas" is on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic, Cement Masons Local 633's apprenticeship program is up and running. Local 633 and other Minnesota Building Trades unions have made adjustments big and small to keep their apprentices' careers on track.

Safety has been the top priority for apprenticeship programs as they navigate the pandemic, just as it is on a union construction site.

"My No. 1 objective is keeping my staff and apprentices coming in here safe," said Dean Mills, director of the Minnesota Laborers Training Center in Lino Lakes. "That's first and foremost. We're being innovative and creative about how we do things, doing the best we can to teach our members and help our contractors out."

To that end, Building Trades unions have worked with state health regulators and the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry to ensure their curricula are both safe and on par with the standards of registered apprenticeship.

The result isn't always ideal, but what has been in 2020?

"It may not be wide open like we'd like it to be, but we're at least covering the bare minimum," Operating Engineers Local 49 Director of Training Eric Gulland said. "So when we do get the pandemic under control and open things up, we're ready to go again."

Unique programs, unique solutions

Minnesota has over 180 registered apprenticeship programs, but most of the state's 12,000 apprentices are enrolled in programs sponsored by Building Trades unions and their employers. Unions and contractors tailor their apprenticeship programs to meet the unique demands of their particular crafts.

No two union apprenticeship programs are the same, and no two programs have responded to COVID-19 the same way either. Union apprenticeship directors have had to consider enrollment numbers, available training space,

curriculum needs and resources in decisions about how to proceed during the pandemic.

Cement Masons Local 633's total enrollment in the apprenticeship program is around 90. With a 14,000-square-foot training center, the union decided it was safe to resume in-person programming this fall, but with several major changes.

Class sizes do not exceed 10 people. Masks are required, and apprentices and training staff maintain six feet of physical distance at all times. That means apprentices train less in crews, where they would work



Ironworkers Local 512 apprentice Travis Strugis gave Gov. Tim Walz a demonstration on the union's training floor after Walz signed an infrastructure jobs bill in October 2020. (Saint Paul Union Advocate)

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shoulder to shoulder, and more on individual projects.

“We’re also cleaning like we’ve never cleaned before,” Apprenticeship Coordinator Brian Farmer said.

At Local 49’s training facility in Hinckley, it’s the polar-opposite approach. The union has shifted the entirety of its apprenticeship curriculum online, except in cases where members need a certification to continue working. Even then, the union allows only five people to gather at one time in remote union halls across the region.

Local 49’s 400 apprentices, who train to operate heavy equipment, are sitting through a lot of Zoom meetings, Gulland said. But instructors have found creative ways to avoid “death by power point.”

During a recent class, Gulland said, one instructor hosted the meeting from a classroom while another filmed a live walk-around inspection of machinery. Apprentices dropped questions into the chat and got answers on the spot.

“The students definitely want to come up and hands-on run the equipment,” Gulland said. “But it seems like it’s worked out to keep them engaged and on track with their apprenticeship requirements during this time.”

The hybrid approach

Other apprenticeship programs have taken a hybrid approach during the pandemic, combining online courses with limited in-person training.

Sheet Metal Workers Local 10’s 450 apprentices resumed in-person classes after Labor Day with daily temperature checks, masks, smaller class sizes and vigorous sanitizing. The union also has introduced night classes, helping stagger the time apprentices are in the facility.

The Laborers, too, have begun offering night classes

and reducing class sizes, Mills said. To prevent clustering inside the union’s training center, each apprentice and instructor is required to enter through the door closest to their classroom or training bay.

While some apprentices have contracted COVID-19, Local 10 Training Coordinator Carl Zitzer said, they are doing the right thing to prevent it from spreading to fellow union members.

“We haven’t had anybody in the building who’s sick, fortunately,” Zitzer said. “We tell them to stay home, do what you’re supposed to do, and when you get back we’ll do what we have to do to get your time in.”

For union apprentices, training time is critical. State regulations require registered apprentices to complete a set number of training hours and work hours each year.

Because Gov. Tim Walz’s emergency order declared the construction industry essential, contractors have continued hiring apprentices throughout the pandemic. But like other schools, training centers halted in-person learning in March, forcing many union apprenticeship programs to make adjustments on the fly to get apprentices the training hours they needed.

“A lot of our apprentices’ pay raises are hinging on their related training hours,” Local 633’s Farmer said.

Shifting to remote

At Local 10, where apprentices lost about eight weeks of scheduled classes in the spring, Zitzer credited the more “computer-savvy” members of his training staff for working with the Sheet Metal Workers international union to move classes online, focusing on parts of the curriculum that don’t require being together on the shop floor.

“These guys jumped right in and developed a bunch of really good stuff,” Zitzer said. “Our apprentices really enjoyed it because we really challenged them. They really had to be like a college student – reading stuff, taking tests, just like at the university.”

This article continues at:

<https://advocate.stpaulunions.org/2020/12/21/making-the-adjustment-union-apprenticeship-programs-get-creative-to-navigate-covid-19-safely/>